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MR. PAGE'S BOOK ON THE NEGRO

THE NEGRO: THE SOUTHERNER'S PROBLEM. By Thomas Nelson Page.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1904.

One takes up a book on the subject of the Negro with a good deal of hesitation, there has been so much dreary stuff written about it; but Mr. Page's book strikes one as being eminently a calm presentation and a sane production and a notable contribution. That it satisfies and answers the many questions were too much to hope; but it is suggestive and even illuminating at points, and is evidently intended to be both frank in spirit and patriotic in purpose.

As the title would indicate, Mr. Page is avowedly writing from the historical point of view of the Southerner. The misunderstandings on the subject, he believes, come largely from ignorance, and one might add, often also from prejudice. He has the race instinct and believes in it, and to get Mr. Page's point of view, one has to understand and accept the matter of race pride, otherwise the appeal is in vain. He believes in the supremacy of the white race as race—in character, constancy, intellect, and the domestic virtues. But he also believes as a citizen and a Christian, in the duties of one race to the other, of one man towards his fellow man. The problem will have to work itself out by economic laws and with enlightened patriotism. Not amalgamation, not deportation is his conclusion, but the two races remaining distinct, each developing under conditions with substantial justice to both. Perhaps he is too optimistic; but one can hardly doubt that he is patriotic.

Good feeling is displayed throughout. Each race should struggle against its own failing: the negro against assaults, the white against lynchings. Education is a necessity: as a citizen the negro must be improved, not debased or permitted to stand still. All members of the race should have elementary and industrial education; higher education should be for those alone capable of justifying it. Industrial education would tend to make them self-reliant and give them self-respect. In 1865, ninety-five per cent. of the labor of the South was done by the negroes as artisans and mechanics; now much of this advantage

has become lost. Principal Booker Washington's methods would bring the race back to this industrial position.

Mr. Page recognizes frankly the mistakes of the Reconstruction period in giving at once universal suffrage. He argues for disfranchisement as better for both races ; but he is against the abolition of the fifteenth amendment. The tests for citizenship should be impartially applied to both races. The black man, like the white man, must learn that he has to develop individually. Negroes must distinguish between negro and negro, a good man and a bad man, just as whites distinguish between white and white.

One knowing the Old South as the author of "Marse Chan" must pay a tribute to the old time negro. In these reminiscences Mr. Page is always happy. He tells of the war, his father and his body-servants, and deplores the change in cordial relationship that has come between the races ; for the undoubted estrangement is a misfortune. A paper reprinted from Mr. Page's volume of twelve years before, "The Old South," while inserted for completeness, is an artistic blemish. It repeats somewhat and in contrast with the rest shows its age. The new papers are far fresher and more pertinent. There is an interesting Appendix on Southern Taxation and Education accompanied with tables of illiteracy in the Southern States.